



The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
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STRATEGY *for a* GREEN CITY SUMMER 2007



The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1827. PHS produces the Philadelphia Flower Show® and sponsors events, educational activities, and publications for novice gardeners, experienced horticulturists, and flower lovers of all ages.

PHS's urban greening program, Philadelphia Green®, works with community groups, residents, city agencies, nonprofits, and other partners to plan and implement greening projects throughout the city. Proceeds from the Flower Show, along with funding from foundations, corporations, government agencies, and individuals, help support its projects. To support the work of PHS and Philadelphia Green, please call 215-988-8800 or make a secure contribution online at www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org. © 2007 PENNSYLVANIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY Text: Jane Carroll Photography by Margaret Funderburg except where noted. Design: Baxendells' Graphic

quality, neighborhood tree planting in older municipalities, and education to get citizens involved in tree stewardship.”

Next, DCNR began to assemble operational partners to carry out the work. Based on its extensive experience with citizen engagement, PHS stepped up to lead the citizen education effort. (For a complete list of partners, please see www.treevitalize.net.)

Within Philadelphia, PHS works with neighborhood groups and the Fairmount Park Commission to organize tree plantings along streets and in parks, while DCNR foresters work with municipalities outside the city. PHS expanded its longstanding Tree Tender training, which teaches city residents to care for street trees, to the surrounding counties (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery) to help supply trained volunteers. PHS also works with the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, and Penn State Cooperative Extension to educate municipal officials about tree care.

Says Carroll, “Given the scope of this project, no one organization could make it happen alone; it had to be a collaborative effort.”

Philadelphia Green senior director Maitreyi Roy says every organization contributes to TreeVitalize but also increases its own impact through the partnership. “For PHS, it allows us to reach a broader constituency and promote the value of trees throughout the region.”

A WORTHWHILE CHALLENGE

A good partnership creates synergy, and the end result is something greater than the sum of its parts. “Working together makes the process more complex, but the accomplishments are richer because of the different perspectives and capacities that each partner brings,” says Mike Groman, senior director for Philadelphia Green. “By bringing numerous stakeholders into the process, a successful partnership also creates a broader base of support, ensuring a more sustainable outcome.”

PHS executive vice president J. Blaine Bonham Jr. notes that the philanthropic community has fully adopted the partnership model, and there are no indications the trend will reverse itself. “The best thing to do,” he says, “is to embrace it, be smart and strategic about it. Maximize the possibilities and the impact of your work through partnership.”

For more information, visit: www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org and click on “Philadelphia Green.”

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PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration + Empowerment =
SUCCESS

There is a favorite motto at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society: “We never travel alone.” PHS accomplishes much of its work by forging dynamic partnerships with community groups, residents, government agencies, other nonprofit organizations, and businesses. Indeed, the partnership model pervades the entire organization, encompassing its education initiatives and renowned Philadelphia Flower Show, as well as its acclaimed urban greening program, Philadelphia Green.

Working in partnership presents challenges and intensive upfront resources and staff time. Each organization has its own culture and its own methods of accomplishing goals. But by combining resources, partners can leverage their respective capacities and talents to tackle problems or implement new initiatives, accomplishing far more than any one organization could achieve alone.

Through Philadelphia Green, PHS has established a reputation for forging successful partnerships to create and enhance green spaces in the city and beyond. Just as importantly, it often serves as a “bridge” or mediator for collaboration among other entities.

Following are three examples of successful collaborations that have transformed landscapes and have

changed the thinking of the people involved. They illustrate the hard work, as well as the rewards, of working in partnership.

JOINING TOGETHER FOR NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

One of Philadelphia Green’s most enduring partnerships is the Parks Revitalization Project, a collaboration with volunteer groups, the Philadelphia Department of Recreation, and the Fairmount Park Commission.

Philadelphia Green senior director Joan Reilly explains that the project began as a “forced marriage.” In the 1990s, the Philadelphia-based William Penn Foundation asked PHS to apply its greening and community-building expertise to improve long-neglected parks in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods in partnership with community residents and the Department of Recreation, which oversees many neighborhood parks.

“It was an ‘irresistible invitation,’ because we were being offered resources to do something that supports our mission and advances our work,” says Reilly.

Philadelphia Green began to establish relationships with staff at all levels of the Department of Recreation and to appreciate its working processes and challenges. Starting



A revitalized Vernon Park in Germantown includes a well-used playground.

with three parks—Vernon Park in Germantown, Norris Square Park in North Philadelphia, and Wharton Square Park in South Philadelphia—it organized neighborhood volunteers into “Friends” groups that could serve as long-term park stewards.

Creating the partnership required patience and persistence. Residents were initially skeptical, having been disappointed by past initiatives, and city employees were at first wary of outside interference. Says Reilly, “Gradually, the community came to understand the city’s limitations. Soon people began to ask how they could help. They were eager to be part of the solution.”

The combined clout and resources of the Department of Recreation, PHS, and the William Penn Foundation brought new hope and a groundswell of community support, including hundreds of willing volunteers. City and state government began to contribute resources for infrastructure and improvements, and private investors, foundations, and corporations stepped forward with additional support. The Fairmount Park Commission joined the partnership in 2002.

The Parks Revitalization Project expanded steadily throughout the 1990s and now involves nearly 80 neighborhood parks. The Project will celebrate its 15th year in 2008. Once abandoned and feared, Philadelphia’s neighborhood parks today draw thousands of people for recreation, concerts, flea markets, and celebrations. Friends groups have developed the capacity to raise their own funds, organize events, and recruit volunteers for cleanups and gardening days.

Front cover photo, left to right: **Joe Caesar of Fairmount Park; Barbara McCabe of the Department of Recreation; Joan Reilly of Philadelphia Green; Doris Gwaltney of Carroll Park Neighbors; and Mark Focht, executive director of the Fairmount Park Commission.**

“This partnership has allowed us to reclaim neighborhood parks and bring them to a level where people can enjoy them,” says Barbara McCabe, parks coordinator for the Recreation Department. “We couldn’t have done this without PHS. We were not in a position to care for the parks the way they needed to be cared for. PHS’s assistance in organizing the community meant that the resources we could provide would be used in the most effective way.”

Adds Reilly, “The program works because we all shared a vision of what these parks could be, and we built the relationships necessary to make the vision a reality.”

TEAMING UP FOR CIVIC LANDSCAPES

Through Philadelphia Green, PHS works to improve prominent **public landscapes** in Philadelphia’s downtown. Partnering with government, corporations, and business improvement districts, PHS has improved the look of city gateways, public plazas, and open spaces, enhancing Philadelphia’s image as a world-class city.

As landholder of the city’s 9,200-acre citywide park system, Fairmount Park has been an important PHS partner for much of this work. The landscaped circle surrounding the Swann Memorial Fountain at **Logan Square**, located between the Philadelphia Museum of Art and City Hall on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, was the focus of an extensive joint renovation project in 2006. The site had fallen into disrepair with uneven paths, barren planting beds, and broken benches. Its signature Empress trees (*Paulownia tomentosa*) were in poor and dangerous condition.

“Maximize the possibilities and the impact of your work through partnership.”

— J. Blaine Bonham Jr.,
Executive Vice President, PHS



The new Logan Square landscape features floral displays, lawns, and new benches. Replacement *paulownia* trees were grown and donated by Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA.

The Pew Charitable Trusts saw an opportunity to bring PHS and Fairmount Park together to renovate the site. “PHS was a natural partner for Pew in the re-landscaping of Logan Square,” says Donald Kimelman, Pew’s managing director for information and civic initiatives. “PHS knows how to work effectively with the appropriate stakeholders to create the necessary support for change.”

Together PHS and Fairmount Park selected Olin Partnership to draw up plans for the site. This design phase was complex, recalls Philadelphia Green director Nancy O’Donnell. “In past projects, PHS alone had directed the design process, but this was a more integrated approach involving landscape designers, city planners and operations managers, contractors, and engineers,” she explains. “Though challenging and time-consuming, this team approach turned out to be a huge plus because we could all be sure the final design would accommodate the varied uses of the site and that the landscape could be properly maintained.”

Other entities that weighed in on the plan were the Center City District, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and the cultural institutions situated on the Parkway.

“The result [of the collaborative process] was a beautifully re-landscaped, prominent civic space that was widely cheered by all concerned,” says Kimelman. “Without PHS’s skills in building productive partnerships, this project would not have gotten done.”

TREEVITALIZE: REGIONAL PROBLEM, REGIONAL SOLUTION

Sometimes environmental challenges span across neighborhoods or city boundaries to encompass an entire region. When a 2003 study by the nonprofit organization American Forests found that Southeastern Pennsylvania was losing its tree canopy at an alarming rate, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) responded by creating a groundbreaking partnership called **TreeVitalize**.

A four-year, \$8 million initiative, TreeVitalize has brought together leaders from all levels of government, nonprofits, foundations, and businesses, as well as citizens to help restore the region’s tree cover. This unprecedented collaboration utilizes the skills of existing organizations while increasing the impact of each participant.

DCNR secretary Michael DiBerardinis envisioned TreeVitalize as a broad partnership from the outset. “Because we were dealing with a regional problem, it didn’t make sense for the state to just come in and start planting trees. We needed to consider the variety of communities affected and their capacity to care for the trees once they were planted. The challenge was finding a way to spread the resources around.”

DCNR convened “listening sessions” to find common ground between the needs of communities, the interests of potential funding organizations, and the ability of regional organizations to implement the program. “Investing the time in this process up front helped ensure that we were all in agreement about our priorities,” says TreeVitalize project director Patrice Carroll. “We decided to focus on three initiatives: planting trees in watersheds to protect water

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Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell announced the launch of TreeVitalize on Arbor Day in April 2004.

Photo: DCNR



At a tree-planting ceremony marking the completion of the new Logan Square landscape, everyone involved in the project gathered for a group portrait.

Joining Forces

Two separate government programs, both seeking to improve Philadelphia’s environment, have been linked together through a partnership with PHS. For several years, the city’s Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI) has been working to revitalize neglected neighborhoods. PHS serves as an NTI contractor to oversee the transformation of abandoned, trash-strewn vacant lots into “clean and green” parcels of available land.

At the same time, the Philadelphia Water Department Office of Watersheds has been experimenting with new ways to manage stormwater runoff, which causes flooding and pollutes rivers and streams. It asked PHS to help create demonstration projects for “Low Impact Development,” an approach that seeks to detain, filter, and slowly infiltrate runoff using green infrastructure such as berms, swales, and vegetation.

PHS brought the two city agencies together by utilizing newly clean NTI lots as stormwater demonstration sites. Philadelphia Green senior director Maitreyi Roy says the partnership has been a perfect fit. “The Water Department can test its prototypes for watershed protection, while NTI can demonstrate the potential of vacant land as a community asset. PHS provides a bridge between the two agencies.”